

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Official Action dated November 3, 2006. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due consideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

Claims 5, 9-10 and 12 are under consideration in this application. Claims 2-4 and 6 are being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 5 is being amended, as set forth in the above marked-up presentation of the claim amendments, in order to more particularly define and distinctly claim Applicants' invention.

The claims are being amended to correct formal errors and/or to better recite or describe the features of the present invention as claimed. Applicants hereby submit that no new matter is being introduced into the application through the submission of this response.

Allowed Subject Matter

Claim 12 was allowed, and claims 5 and 9-10 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form to include all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Since claim 5 is being rewritten in independent form to include all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, and claims 9-10 and 12 depend from claim 5, claims 5, 9-10 and 12 are in condition for allowance.

Prior Art Rejections

Claims 2-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 6,512,504 to Yamauchi et al., and claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamauchi '504 in view of US Patent No. 6,479,837 to Ogawa and US Pat. App. Pub. No. 2003/0160239 of Shinigawa et al.

Since claims 2-4 and 6 are being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, the above rejections become moot.

Conclusion

In view of all the above, Applicants respectfully submit that certain clear and distinct differences as discussed exist between the present invention as now claimed and the prior art references upon which the rejections in the Office Action rely. These differences are more than sufficient that the present invention as now claimed would not have been anticipated nor rendered obvious given the prior art. Rather, the present invention as a whole is distinguishable, and thereby allowable over the prior art.

Favorable reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative at the address and telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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